

Keyword: Utah

Something To Declare: Rockies getting higher; bargain Bangkok; San Diego on screen; New Zealand sand flies

Breckenridge is the most popular US resort among British skiers

Destination of the week : Rockies getting higher

Things were already looking up for skiers and boarders planning a high time in the western US when, during the summer, the Utah state law on alcohol consumption was changed. Previously, bars operated as "clubs": to be served alcoholic drinks customers had to pay a membership fee. But under the new law, bars and pubs are open to the public. Then, late last month, came the opening of the first new distillery in Utah since the prohibition era, in the state's premier ski town, Park City.

Across the state line in Colorado, another change in policy on intoxicating substances will be implemented from New Year's Day at Breckenridge - the most popular US resort among British skiers. In a referendum last month, the Rocky Mountain community decided by 617 votes to 253 to decriminalise the possession of one ounce or less of marijuana by people aged 21 and over. Possession remains illegal under Colorado state law, however; local police chief Rick Holman told the Summit Daily News that "we still have tools at our disposal".

Stephen Wood

Bargain of the week: Bangkok and beyond

How to fill the posh seats without "cannabalisising" revenue by allowing business traveller to get cheap tickets? That is the problem facing every long-haul airline. The solution of Thai Airways (0870 6060 911; thaiairways.co.uk) is to sell cut-price "companion fares" on its non-stop Heathrow-Bangkok flights from 19 January to 30 June. If two people travel together, the per-person fare in business class is £1,430 return; in first class, £2,249 return.

Add-on domestic flights within Thailand are available for around £31 return: you just pay applicable taxes and charges.

Tip of the week: San Diego on screen

The city where *Some Like it Hot* was filmed, and which arguably has the finest climate in the world, is the subject of *48 Hours In*, on Travel Channel at 9pm on Wednesday evening, 8 December. The Travel Channel is available on Sky 251, or

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watch the film at independent.co.uk/sandiego.

Warning of the week: New Zealand sand flies

Despite the many attractions of New Zealand, there are some irritations - notably sandflies, which can plague the west coast of the South Island. The females bite humans for blood, while the males are vegetarian. The insect's capacity for maddening bites is tackled in, of all places, Sir Ian McKellen's website (mckellen.com). The actor played Gandalf, pictured, in Lord of the Rings, which was filmed in New Zealand, and has become, in his own words, "an unpaid but enthusiastic proselytiser on behalf of all things kiwi".

But Sir Ian writes of sandflies: "I first met them en masse at the glorious Milford Sound, where visitors (after the most beautiful drive in the world) are met, at least during the summer, by crowds of the little buggers. There are patent unctions which cope, and tobacco repels them too, but I hope you reckoned them an insignificant pest compared with the glory of their habitat.

"Oddly, when filming I don't recall them at all. Honestly. Had there been, we would have set the Orcs on them."

<http://www.independent.co.uk/travel/news-and-advice/something-to-declare-rockies-getting-higher-bargain-bangkok-san-diego-on-screen-new-zealand-sand-flies-1834323.html>